

PROJECT MANAGER SOLDIER SURVIVABILITY WELCOMES NEW LEADER

BY: FREDERICK SHEAR



FORT BELVOIR, VA. — Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier's Project Manager Soldier Survivability (PM SSV) executed a Change of Charter, with Col. Derek Bird assuming leadership as PM from Col. Stephen Thomas, at Fort Belvoir on August 21st.



PM SSV's mission is to equip, clothe, and protect Soldiers and aircrews to maximize performance and provide enhanced capabilities. The Product Managers within SSV—Soldier Protective Equipment (PdM SPE), Soldier Clothing and Individual Equipment (PdM SCIE) and

Air Warrior (PdM AW)—develop, procure and field Soldier protective equipment, combat and dress uniforms, individual parachute systems and aviation life support equipment.

Brig. Gen. Anthony Potts, PEO Soldier, hosted the ceremony, which highlighted the responsibilities and accomplishments of SSV over the last several years.

All participants wore the new Army Green Service Uniform (AGSU), one of the many programs that falls in SSV's portfolio. The AGSU rollout began last month at Fort Knox, KY, where the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) began sales and issued new uniforms to Army Recruiting Course students.

"What an honor it is to be here in this position today," said Bird. "In my opinion, this project management office is number one in the Army because what we do affects Soldiers at the most fundamental level."

Bird is no stranger to PEO Soldier, having previously served as Product Manager Ground Soldier Systems; he returns to PEO Soldier from his most recent assignment as Executive Officer for the Principal Deputy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology.

During the ceremony, Potts effusively praised Thomas for his leadership and dedication to the Army's Soldiers. Potts

described Thomas as a "master warrior, master leader," and a "man of great character." Potts said, "If my son was coming into the Army, I'd look at that man right there, and I'd say that's who you want to be."

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Potts highlighted how Thomas presided over the development of the AGSU, the Improved Hot Weather Combat Uniform (IHWCU)—about which Potts said we "can't keep it on the shelves"—the Athletic Footwear, the Soldier Protection System (SPS), Modular Handgun Holster (MHH) and cold weather combat gear, among other programs. He also emphasized how under Thomas' leadership, PEO Soldier



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designed clothing and equipment to better fit smaller stature and female Soldiers.

"Steve will have one of the most amazing legacies that just about anybody who's led a brigade command-level could leave," said Potts.

Thomas credited the PEO Soldier workforce for the accomplishments during his tenure. "PM SSV is responsible for equipping every Soldier in the Army in some manner. And when you take a moment to think of that and reflect on the things that the project office does on a year to year basis, it's truly amazing," he said.

The product teams, Soldiers and civilians, "consistently accept all the challenges that are presented and demonstrate the ability to complete tasks with a level of professionalism above and beyond the call of duty," said Thomas.

Col. Thomas' wife Juanita and other family members were also present for the ceremony. "I'll do a better job of making it home in time for a decent dinner instead of having late dinners," he said.

Thomas plans on retiring from the Army in early 2021.